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ABSTRACT

The minority-student population of Florida is rapidly increasing, to the point that minorities now represent 40 percent of the nearly 2 million public school students. All indications are that this trend will continue. Many of these students have a limited English proficiency (LEP), and most LEP students are Hispanic Americans. To educate these students more effectively, the Florida Department of Education has developed a set of programs known as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The study described assesses the academic performance of the public school population, emphasizing the achievements of Hispanic and LEP students who have participated in ESOL programs. Results show clearly that Florida's programs are not meeting the needs of the majority of its Hispanic and LEP students. A survey of 350 randomly selected public school teachers ascertained their opinions of the state's efforts to obtain recommendations for improving education for Hispanic and LEP students. The political environment of Florida appears right for serious consideration of proposals for educational reform in Florida and the nation. Two tables and 11 figures provide information about Hispanic students. (Contains 27 references.) (SLD)

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The Academic Performance of Hispanics in Florida Public Schools

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The Academic Performance of Hispanics in Florida Public Schools

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I. Abstract

This study shows that Florida's minority student population is rapidly increasing, to the point that minorities now represent 40 percent of all its nearly 2 million public school students. Furthermore, all indications are that this is a trend that will continue into the future. Many of these minority students are limited in their English proficiency (LEP), and most of these LEP students are Hispanics.[1] To more effectively educate these linguistically disadvantages students, the Florida Department of Education (DOE) has developed a set of programs collectively known as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

The investigation assesses the success of instruction provided to culturally diverse students by evaluating the academic performance of the State's public school population, placing greatest emphasis on the achievement levels of Hispanic students and LEP students who have participated in Florida's ESOL programs. Comparisons are made between the State's Hispanic and LEP students and non-Hispanic and Black students in the State, and (when possible) comparisons are also made with national average performance levels. Results clearly show that Florida's public school system is not meeting the educational needs of the majority of its Hispanic and LEP students.

A survey of 350 randomly selected public school teachers throughout the State of Florida was undertaken by DOE to ascertain their opinions of the State's efforts at educating students from multicultural backgrounds. Results from that survey are reported in this paper and then recommendations are made regarding how the State of Florida can improve the education of its Hispanic and LEP students.

This paper concludes that the political environment now appears

[1]Throughout this paper the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" are used interchangeably. Likewise, the terms "Blacks" and "Afro-Americans" are considered synonyms.

to be right for serious consideration of proposals advocating educational reform both in the State of Florida and throughout the nation. Furthermore, the education of the limited English proficient Hispanic students is a problem that must be faced now because it will only become harder to solve in the future as this segment of both the State's and nation's student populations continues to grow.

II. Acknowledgements

The Cuban American Policy Center expresses its appreciation to Dr. Arnhilda Badia, Associate Professor for Modern Languages Education at Florida International University, who conducted the research and analysis for this issue paper. In addition, we acknowledge with gratitude the constructive comments and reviews of this research provided by two anonymous reviewers. We also thank Alina E. Becker (CNC Director for Program Development) for her advice and suggestions regarding the format of this issue paper.

As customary, statements not attributed to a specific source are the sole responsibility of the author, and the conclusions and recommendations are the responsibility of the Cuban American Policy Center (a program of the Cuban American National Council).

III. Introduction

The Florida public school population, which is comprised of nearly two million students, has shown a dramatic change in its ethnic composition since 1959 when the first wave of Cubans arrived in the United States. During the decade of the 1980s and the early 1990s, the percentages of students from different ethnic backgrounds continued to increase (Figure 1). An indication of this is that minority students have increased their proportional representation in the State's total school population from 32 percent in 1980 to 40 percent in 1993.[2] The minority student population is comprised mainly of Blacks and Hispanics, but also includes lesser numbers of other groups such as Asians and Native Americans.[3] This trend of minority growth is also found in the total United States population, as the Hispanic representation has increased to over 22 million (comprising about 9 percent of the total population), making it the nation's second largest minority behind African-Americans.[4] Since the Latino population is very young, it has been estimated that Hispanics will comprise more then 25 percent of America's children less than 17 years of age by the year 2020.[5]

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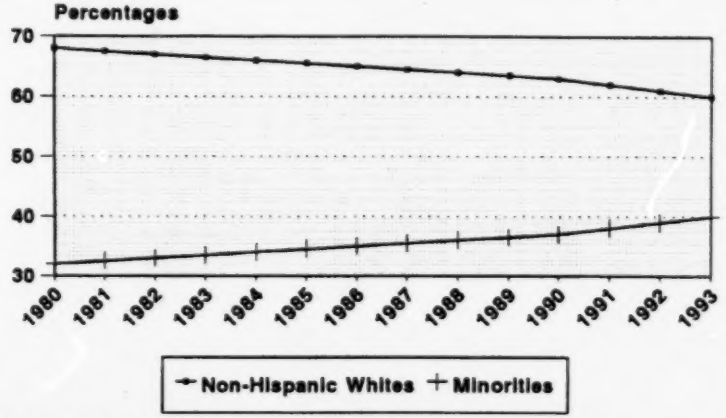
[2]Florida Department of Education, *Management Information Services Statistical Reports*, Tallahassee, Florida, 1980-1993.

[3]Approximately 24 percent of Florida's minority students are Black and about 15 percent are Hispanic. Thus, together they comprise approximately 97 percent of Florida's minority student population. Florida Department of Education, *Florida School Reports*, Management Information Services, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.

[4]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Hispanic Population in the United States, 1992*, Current Population Reports, P20-465RV, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1993.

[5]Tomás Rivera Center, *The Policies and the Promise: The Public Schooling of Latin Children*, Claremont, California, 1993.

TRENDS IN THE COMPOSTION OF FLORIDA'S STUDENT POPULATION 1980-1993



Florida Department of Education, Management Information Services Statistical Reports, 1980-1993.

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The recent growth in Florida's minority student population is due primarily to the immigration and natural increase (births minus deaths) of Hispanics, as the proportional representation of Latinos in Florida's school population has increased from 8 percent in 1980 to 15 percent in 1993. In South Florida (extending from Orlando southward to Miami) minorities have become the majority, constituting almost 60 percent of the public school population. Dade County shows the greatest diversity in the State, with 81.5 percent of its students being members of minority groups.[6]

Adding to an appreciation of Florida's student diversity is an understanding that both of its two major components are in themselves very diverse. For example, the State's Hispanic students derive from almost every Spanish-speaking country in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain. In addition, about 46 percent of the Latino students were born in the United States but either one or both of their parents are of Hispanic origin.[7] Although the majority of the tate's Black students were born in the United States, thousands of others have immigrated from such countries as Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, the Bahamas, and a number of African countries.[8]

Certainly, the State's student body has been culturally enriched by this increasing ethnic diversity. However, it is also true that such rapid growth and change has brought along with it certain strains on Florida's educational system. Perhaps the most difficult of these challenges is the need to provide English language skills to a rapidly increasing number of students who speak little or no English when they arrive in Florida. Florida's Department of Education (DOE),

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[6]Florida Department of Education, *Management Information Services Statistical Reports*, Tallahassee, Florida, 1992-1993.

[7]Florida Department of Education, *Student Database*, Tallahassee, 1993.

[8]Florida Department of Education, *Annual Status Report on the Implementation of the 1990 ESOL Agreement*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1994.

following a policy established by the U.S. Department of Education after passage of the Bilingual Education Act, classifies such students as being "Limited English Proficient" (LEP) and has created special instructional programs for them called "English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)." During the 1992-1993 school year, out of nearly two million Florida students, 201,758 were identified as being LEP and 131,715 of these (65 percent) are presently enrolled in ESOL programs. Figure 2 indicates that the number of Florida students participating in ESOL programs has increased almost fourfold during the five year period between 1988 and 1993. LEP students comprise 31.5 percent of Florida's total Hispanic student population, which is lower than the comparable proportions of 44.1 percent and 66.7 percent for the states of California and New York, respectively.[9]

Almost three quarters of Florida's students who are enrolled in the State's ESOL programs are Hispanic (Figure 3). The next largest group is comprised of African-Americans, with smaller numbers coming mainly from European and Asian countries. Most of the Black ESOL students are Haitians, with a few others coming from a variety of Caribbean islands and African countries.[10] For the 1992-1993 educational year, school districts throughout the State reported providing ESOL programs to students speaking more than 65 different languages and who came from about 127 countries.

The goals of this issue paper are to: (1) provide a brief overview of Florida's ESOL program; (2) assess the effectiveness of the State's educational efforts by evaluating the academic performance of the State's public school population, placing greatest emphasis on the achievement levels of Hispanic students and LEP

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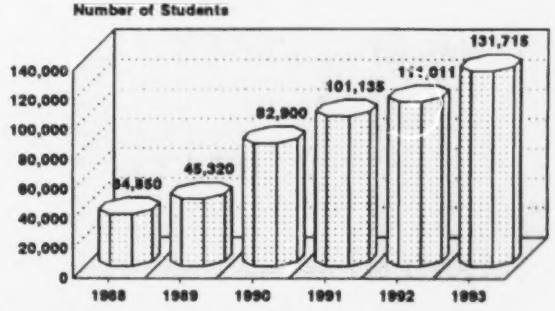
[9]Tomás River Center, *The Policies and the Promise: The Public Schooling of Latin Children*, Claremont, California, 1993.

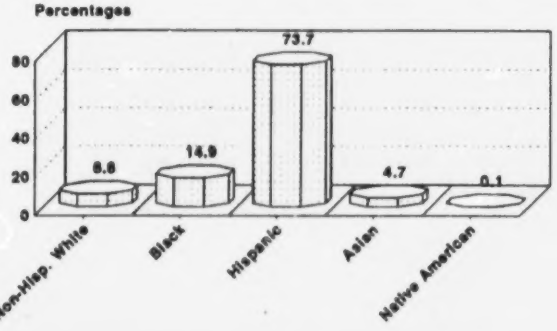
[10]Although the vast majority of immigrants to Florida who come from Jamaica, the Bahamas, and other former British colonial islands in the Caribbean speak English as their mother tongue, about 830 students who came from these islands are classified as LEP by Florida's school districts.

NUMBERS OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN FLORIDA'S ESOL PROGRAMS 1988-1993



Florida Department of Education, Annual ESOL Status Report, 1993.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN FLORIDA'S ESOL PROGRAMS 1993



Florida Department of Education, Annual ESOL Status Report, 1993.

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students who have participated in Florida's schools; (3) describe results of a survey of Florida teachers regarding their opinions about why many of Florida's culturally diverse students are doing poorly in the State's public schools; and (4) provide recommendations as to how Florida schools can improve their teaching of culturally diverse students.

IV. Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the findings of the analysis of performance levels of Florida's students, and it also covers the results derived from the survey of a sample of 350 of Florida's teachers. Details of the analysis of Florida's student performance levels are provided later in this paper.

A. Summary of Findings for Florida's Student Performance Levels

The section of the issue paper that provides details of an analysis of Florida's student performances demonstrates clearly that by virtually any measure, for any grade level, for any of the basic skill areas, Hispanic and Black students have lower academic performance levels than non-Hispanic Whites in Florida's public schools. These disparities continue to exist despite recent efforts through Florida's ESOL programs to change them. In fact, there is some evidence that the situation has worsened since the 1980s, as demonstrated by the High School Competency Test in communication skills. Failure rates on the HSCT suggest that the gap between non-Latin Whites and both Hispanics and Blacks is apparently increasing. The educational achievement is worst of all for LEP students, the majority of whom have immigrated to Florida from Latin America and the Caribbean. As a means of placing these findings in perspective, it also has been shown that Florida's non-Latin White student body scores below average for the nation as a whole. Thus, not only are Florida's Hispanic, African-American, and LEP students scoring below the non-Hispanic White average for the State,

but the average they are being compared to (that of Florida's non-Latin Whites) is also below the national average.

It is clear that Florida's public school system is not meeting the educational needs of every student, especially many of its Hispanic and LEP students. In providing evidence in support of this statement, this issue paper has had to be selective in the variables discussed because of page constraints. Still, the author has looked at other measures of the disadvantaged situation that Hispanic and LEP students find themselves in Florida. Three of the more significant of these findings are:

- LEP students have the lowest high school graduation rates in Florida. Among the LEP students, those who are Hispanic have the lowest proportion graduating of all groups analyzed (62 percent).
- Hispanic LEP Students have the highest high school drop out rates (11 percent).
- Hispanics do not participate in the State's gifted programs proportionately to their percentage of Florida's student body. They represent only five percent of all students in gifted programs but comprise 15 percent of the State's total public school population. Further emphasizing this point is the finding that only 1.3 percent of the Hispanic students participated in any of the State's programs for gifted students, compared to 4.8 percent for non-Hispanic Whites and 5.8 percent for Asians.

Clearly, Florida schools are very far from attaining Goal 3 of Blueprint 2000 which reads: "Students successfully compete at the highest levels nationally and internationally."

B. Teacher Survey Findings

In order to gain some understanding of why Florida's schools are not meeting the needs of the majority of its Hispanic and LEP students, the Florida Department of Education conducted a survey in 1993 of 350 randomly selected teachers throughout the State. A 29

item questionnaire was used in which teachers were allowed to provide comments. Questions were asked that covered nine general areas.[11] A large majority of the respondents replied that they need:

- more **time** allocated for special instruction of culturally diverse students
- adequate **textbooks** for teaching Florida's ethnic populations
- more appropriate multicultural materials in school **libraries and media centers** to avoid ethnic stereotyping
- **smaller ESOL classes** to provide the special and individual attention students need
- student **tests that are free of cultural bias**
- more and better **training of teachers**
- more **parental involvement** (Over 80 percent of the respondents commented that there is far too little minority parental involvement in the schools.)
- better **cultural balance** in teacher representation (In other words, there should be more minority teachers to serve as role models for students.)
- **clarification of expectations** by the Florida Department of Education (DOE) on how to comply with the META Consent Agreement (Over 60 percent of the teachers surveyed expressed frustration over not having enough information about policies and guidelines concerning the education of minority students.)
- DOE to specify more clearly its requirements for preparation of **school district LEP annual reports**.

These findings clearly indicate that schools are not providing a learning environment conducive to teaching and learning, which is

[11]The nine areas covered by the questions were: (1) policy, guidelines, and initiatives, (2) recruitment of culturally diverse personnel, (3) family and community involvement, (4) curriculum and instruction, (5) instructional assessment and materials, (6) library and media materials and services, (7) teacher training, (8) counseling services, and (9) extracurricular activities for students.

Goal 4 of Blueprint 2000. Neither are they meeting Goal 6, which deals with the preparation of teachers. Furthermore, Goal 1, which deals with how communities and schools collaborate in the educational process, has not been met either.

V. Recommendations for Improving the Education of Florida's Hispanic and LEP Students

Based on the survey of Florida teachers, the results of this issue paper's analysis of student performance, interviews with school administrators, analysis of the Florida Department of Education Student Database, and reading of the literature dealing with the teaching of multicultural cultural students (especially those with limited English proficiency) the following recommendations are made with the goal of improving the education of Florida's Hispanic and LEP students:

A. Overall Recommendations

- Provisions need to be established to ensure that funding intended to be used in the classroom for categorically funded programs based on weighted funds that are tied to student enrollments, as is the case with ESOL programs, are used the way they were intended to be used.
- Florida should redouble its efforts at recruiting more Hispanic and African-American teachers. Currently, in Florida's public school system, 81 percent of the classroom teachers are non-Latin whites, 15 percent are Black, and only 4 percent are Hispanic. Recent studies find that the presence of Latino teachers improves the academic performance of Hispanic children, reduces misplacement in special education programs, increases their identification as gifted students, and decreases

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drop-out rates.[12] Standard 3 of Goal 6 in Blueprint 2000 requires that the State, district, and schools attract and retain teachers who reflect racial and ethnic diversity. Recruitment strategies to attract minority teachers can be achieved through cooperation with the State's Equal Employment Opportunity and universities' Affirmative Action offices.

- Monetary incentives, such as those used in the State of California,[13] should be provided to minority teachers who are underrepresented in Florida's schools and are teaching LEP students.
- Florida should clarify its expectations of teachers who teach ESOL classes and clearly explain how it expects them to accomplish the task of complying with the META Consent Agreement. More specific guidelines and a better monitoring system should be established to see that this goal is achieved and that funds are properly used.
- Guidelines for the State's gifted programs should be reviewed to determine if they are free of cultural bias and efforts should be made to recruit more Hispanic students for participation in them. This task should be assigned to bilingual counselors and bilingual decision-makers with experience in testing gifted students.
- When the META Consent Decree was signed, Florida's DOE agreed that ESOL courses taken in high school would be considered to be equivalent to regular courses and would count in the calculation of student grade point averages (GPAs). However, universities in the State of Florida University System often do not accept ESOL courses as equivalent to basic high school English and sometimes they do not count the ESOL grades in calculations of GPAs. These policies are in direct

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[12]The Tomás Rivera Center, *Resolving A Crisis in Education: Latin Teachers for Tomorrow's Classrooms*, Claremont, California, 1993.

[13]The state of California provides an incentive of $5,000 to bilingual teachers who are providing instruction to LEP students.

contradiction to the META accord and they should be corrected immediately.

- There is a critical need to develop a Center for Multicultural Educational Research at one of Florida's state-supported institutions. In addition to conducting research dealing with multicultural education topics, it would also oversee and contribute to development of curriculum materials and modules to be used in the classroom. This Center would also serve as a clearinghouse for development of tests that are culturally unbiased and would become a central depository for data and other information relating to topics of multicultural education.
- Coordination of all multicultural-related education programs should be centralized under the Office of Multicultural Student Language Education in the Florida's Department of Education. This would be the office that would become responsible for coordination of the State's efforts at improving multicultural education and overseeing compliance with the META Consent Decree. It also should monitor the spending of funds intended to be used by the State's ESOL programs.
- Additional support from the State of Florida needs to be provided to ensure continued funding for the staff of the Office of Multicultural Student Language Education. Currently, three of the staff positions are funded from federal government grants, and there is no guarantee that these positions will continue to be funded into the future. This important office needs the continuity obtained by permanent funding to maintain and expand the level of technical assistance required by the school districts.
- The Department of Education must expand its database to keep records of training provided by districts in the areas required for staff development in ESOL.

B. Curriculum Design Recommendations

- Model programs which have proven to be successful in preparing LEP students to succeed academically should be

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replicated and funded at the appropriate level to reduce drop-out rates and increase graduation rates among LEP students. ESOL programs should be considered as a component of bilingual programs.

- The tracking practices currently used by Florida's school districts must be abolished to ensure that opportunities to learn are provided through a substantive core of academic preparation for all students in pre K to 12th grades.

C. Program Delivery Recommendations

- Smaller class sizes should be established for effective instruction of LEP students. ESOL classes should not include more than 15 students because of the personal attention required to provide instruction to LEP students.
- Students should be classified according to their level of English language proficiency instead of only by grade level.
- More preparation time should be allocated to teachers instructing in ESOL programs because of the greater time it takes to prepare individualized instruction. To accomplish this, the average time spent in classroom instruction should be reduced.
- Teachers should be provided with at least part-time bilingual assistance in preparation of materials and classroom instruction because of the time-consuming nature of planning and preparing for individualized instruction for students who are functioning at different levels of ability and coming from different cultural backgrounds.

D. Materials Recommendations

- The State of Florida needs to speed-up its review and approval process for multicultural textbooks and it must allocate more funding to ensure that good quality and current multicultural textbooks are available in each of its schools.
- Libraries and media centers should be provided with more updated multicultural materials in addition to textbooks provided

for the classroom.

- Specific guidelines must be provided to teachers and State adoption committees to detect cultural bias before textbooks are selected and approved for classroom use.

E. Student Testing Recommendations

- Florida should make a greater effort to develop tests that are free of cultural bias. A committee comprised of school teachers, university academicians, and leaders of Florida's major Hispanic and Black communities should be commissioned to ensure that this goal is achieved.
- Alternative culturally valid assessment must be developed to better determine LEP students progress. This must include observations, portfolios, and student assessment in their native language.

F. Teacher Training Recommendations

- ESOL teacher training should be implemented in coordination with certified university programs instead of being run as isolated inservice training ventures through use of television videos and local staff. Local staff are often already overworked and undertrained, making it extremely difficult for them to become committed to implementation of a program as important and sensitive as this.
- Certification requirements should be expanded to include bilingual education competencies beyond those required for an ESOL endorsement.
- University programs should infuse in all teacher training programs at least one course that deals with different aspects of dealing effectively with multilingual and multicultural students.

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G. Community Participation Recommendations

- Greater efforts should be made to involve parents in the education of their children in the State's ESOL program. Virtually all studies of educational success have demonstrated the importance of parental support to the educational process of their children. Both students and parents should be interviewed (in their native language, if possible) to determine their commitment to obtaining a good education, and counselors should be readily available to ensure that the lines of communication are open between parents, students, and teachers.
- Members of the school district Citizen Advisory Boards must be representative of the ethnic and racial composition of the communities they serve.

VI. Policy Implications

In 1992, the Cuban American Policy Center published an issue paper[14] whose central theme was that the United States desperately needs to provide a better and more relevant education for its growing minority populations and especially its Hispanic component. It stated that the emergency nature of this is such that no time should be wasted in addressing this problem. Between 1980 and 1990 the nation's Hispanic population grew at a decade rate of 53 percent, while the non-Latin population grew by only about seven percent.[15] All signs point to continued rapid growth in the nation's Latino population, which is expected to become the United States' largest

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[14]Cuban American Policy Center, *The Challenge of Education, No Time to Waste No Room for Failure*, Cuban American National Council, Miami, Florida, 1990.

[15]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population*, "Persons of Hispanic Origin in the United States," 1990 CP-3-3, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1993.

minority population component by the year 2050.[16] This is one way of saying that if little is done now to remedy the current poor educational record of Hispanic students, the situation will only become worse in the future and thus, will become harder to solve later. Clearly, the problems Florida is encountering in adequately educating its rapidly growing Hispanic population is part of a larger similar problem for the nation as a whole.

In 1987 the voting population of Florida passed a referendum to initiate a State lottery that would provide additional needed funding for the State's educational system. Unfortunately, Florida legislators have chosen to utilize the State's lottery funds to supplant, instead of supplement, funds already available for education. In December 1993 the U.S. Census Bureau released a report[17] showing that Florida ranked 44th among all the nation's States in its per capita funding for education and it ranked 50th (dead last) in its funding for higher education.[18] The findings of this issue paper clearly show that the effectiveness of Florida's education has not markedly improved with respect to its success in educating the State's Hispanic population and especially its LEP students (most of whom are Hispanic). In fact, this study has clearly demonstrated that, since the 1980s, the gap between the passing rates on the High School Competency Test for non-Latin Whites and Hispanics has widened.

If the goals of Blueprint 2000 are to be met, it is critical that minority students start receiving the kind of attention they deserve,

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[16]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1992 to 2050*, P-25, No. 1092, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1992.

[17]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *State Government Finances*, Series GF/92-3, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1993.

[18]U.S. Census Bureau, *Census and You*, vol. 28, No. 12, December 1993, p. 7, Washington, D.C.

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so the negative trends observed in this analysis of academic performance can be reversed. The time to act is now because, in the words of the 1990 Cuban American Policy Center report mentioned earlier, "there is no time to waste and no room for failure." Another reason to act now is that the time appears to be right for serious consideration of proposals such as those suggested in this issue paper. As an example of this favorable climate for educational reform, President Clinton signed an executive order that will establish a new *Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans* the week this paper was sent to the printers to be published.[19]

As the Florida Legislature convenes in 1994 to consider the problems faced by the State, it will almost certainly concentrate its efforts on a major criminal justice package. This paper may make legislators also realize that, as stated in Blueprint 200, "the children and youth of the State are its future and its most precious resource." Providing students with a quality education, free of cultural bias , and equal access to facilities and programs will help ensure realization of the potential of this future resource.

VII. An Overview Of Florida's ESOL Program

Florida's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction became a State budget item in 1987 when then State Representative Arnhilda (Gonzalez-Quevedo) Badia (the author of this paper) presented an amendment to the funding formula used to distribute funds to the State's school districts. The amendment was passed unanimously by the Appropriations Committee in both the State's House and the Senate. The funding for this item has grown from about $110 million in 1989-1990 to over $225 million in 1992-

[19]Maydel Santana, "U.S. Panel For Hispanic Education Created," *The Miami Herald*, February 23, 1994, p. 3A.

1993.[20] In addition to this funding, there are several federally funded programs serving immigrant and refugee children such as the Refugee Entrant Assistance Program, the U.S. Department of Education Title VII Bilingual Program, and under Chapter 1 Basic and Migrant Programs. Federal funds providing services to immigrant students amount to over $8 million a year, without counting Chapter 1 and Title 7 funds.[21]

Training is required for teachers of ESOL and to teachers who instruct LEP students in other programs. Consequently, educational personnel across the State participate in staff development for ESOL programs that includes training in multicultural awareness, curriculum development, second language instructional methodology, linguistics, and testing. An extensive interagency network has been developed, including school-district coordinators, to provide inservice training. Many districts offer ESOL training through inservice workshops and university courses. Some districts have prepared teachers to become ESOL trainers and have developed in-district capacity to train other teachers and administrative staff. Other teachers have become certified in ESOL through a video training program that was developed by Florida International University under a contract with the Florida Department of Education.

The Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy (**META**) group[22] presented a class action complaint against the Florida State

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[20]Governor's Office, *Florida's Annual Appropriations Report*, Tallahassee, Florida, 1989-1993.

[21]Florida Department of Education, *Annual Status Report on the Implementation of the 1990 ESOL Agreement*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1994.

[22]META, Inc. is a California-based organization concerned with equal access to educational opportunities in all public schools for children with limited English proficiency. The Florida State Department of Education and META consent degree establishes requirements for the delivery of

Board of Education and DOE in 1989 because so many of the State's LEP students were performing academically below national norms. In 1990 the "English for Speakers of Other Languages Settlement Agreement," more popularly known as the "META Consent Decree," was approved by the State Board of Education as means of ending this litigation. This agreement requires equal access of LEP students to all programs and states that certain special services must be provided to them. One consequence of the agreement has been a major expansion of services provided to LEP students and a large increase in the amount of funding available to support adequate instruction and special training programs.

The Florida DOE contracted the services of the author of this paper and Florida International University to conduct a study to determine the extent to which Florida is satisfying the needs of minority students and meeting the goals of the META/DOE agreement.[23] Recommendations based on the study's findings were presented to the Florida Accountability Commission in October, 1993.

This issue paper is based on the results of that study and provides additional findings and recommendations on how to meet the educational needs of minority students, placing emphasis on Hispanic and LEP students (most of whom are Hispanic). Its

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services to LEP students and contains provisions related to inservice and re-certification requirements for all instructional personnel. Other organizations were plaintiffs in the original lawsuit that resulted in the Decree. These included: Florida State Conference of NAACP Branches, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Spanish American League Against Discrimination (SALAD), Farm Workers Association of Central Florida, Haitian Refugee Center, Haitian Educators Association, American Hispanic Educators Association of DADE (AHEAD), and Aspira. Through this agreement, Florida joins other states such as California, New York, Texas, and Illinois in setting standards for providing services to LEP students.

[23] Arnhilda Badia and J.R. Caplan, *Multicultural Education in Florida: A Research Study*, Florida Department of Education, Tallahassee, 1993.

findings will be used by the Florida Accountability Commission to submit a legislative package to the Florida Legislature. It is expected that the Legislature will initiate some action on this important issue during its 1994 Session, so appropriate steps can be taken to implement educational services mandated by Chapter 91-226 of the *Laws of Florida*.[24] It will also serve as a vehicle to prepare elected officials in making plans for the implementation of *Blueprint 2000*.[25]

VIII. Methodology

A number of reports, documents, publications, school files, and the Florida Department of Education Student Database were used to

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[24]In 1992, the Florida Legislature passed the Florida Multicultural Education Act of 1992, amending Section 229.594 of the Florida Statutes which provides requirements for the implementation of multicultural education programs, selection of instructional materials, teacher and personnel training, and adds additional powers and duties to the Florida Multicultural Education Review Task Force, which was established in 1991. One of the responsibilities of the Task Force is to submit to the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability an annual report with recommendations, in order to determine if the state's school districts are providing an effective multicultural education program to meet the needs of its student population.

[25]The 1991 Florida Legislature passed the Educational Reform and Accountability Act, which mandated that a plan (called "Blueprint 2000") be developed to meet the future needs of Florida schools in providing adequate services to the state's student population and to guide schools in meeting the 7 state educational goals. For more information see: Florida Board of Education, *Blueprint 2000: A System of School Improvement and Accountability*, Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993; and Florida Board of Education, *Transition System: Companion to Blueprint 2000*, Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.

analyze how Florida students are performing academically.[26] Particular attention was given to the basic skill areas. The writing skills of Florida's students in grades 4 and 8 were assessed using the Florida Writes Exam[27]. Mathematics competency was analyzed using results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress Test given to 4th and 8th grade students.[28] Several other test results also were used to determine how Florida's students are performing, such as the Grade Ten Assessment Test[29] and the High School Competency Test.[30] The author studied the drop-out population, school suspensions, and student participation in exceptional education programs in Florida's schools. Charts were developed to show how several ethnic and racial groups performed and their level of participation in different programs. In addition, a survey was administered to a random sample of 350 teachers selected throughout the State to obtain their opinions regarding curriculum guidelines, instructional facilities, availability of resources, school policies, program implementation, teacher training, and family and community involvement in relation to multicultural education. Responses were analyzed to determine areas of overall agreement

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[26]The bibliography for this issue paper contains a complete listing of the sources used in this investigation.

[27]For more information regarding this exam see: Florida Department of Education, *Florida Writes*, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.

[28]For more information on this exam and the results it produced see: U.S. Department of Education, *Mathematics State Report for Florida*, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, D.C., 1992.

[29]Florida Department of Education, *Grade Ten Assessment Test (GTAT), State, District, and School Report*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1992.

[30]Florida Department of Education, *High School Competency Test, Grade Eleven: Statistical Report*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.

and disagreement among Florida teachers regarding how well Florida's schools are meeting the educational needs of Florida's students who come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

IX. Assessment of Student Performance

Statewide data on student performance were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of services being provided to Florida students, with a focus on Hispanics and LEP students. Until 1992 most data for Florida's elementary students were reported by race and ethnic categories but was not provided separately for LEP students. As a consequence, it was not possible until that time to obtain state-wide performance data for elementary school LEP students. However, the situation is better for analysis of the performance of high school students because separate LEP reporting categories are available for results from the Grade Ten Assessment Test and for the High School Competency Test (given during grade 11). This section of the issue paper focuses on the performance of Hispanic students and, when possible, on LEP students. Figures are also provided for non-Latin Whites and Blacks as standards to which the achievement levels of Hispanic and LEP students can be compared.

A. Fourth and Eighth Grade Performance

Both fourth and eighth graders in Florida were evaluated in terms of their performances on writing and mathematics examinations and they were compared with each other based on ethnic or racial background. The performances in mathematics were also compared to national averages for ethnic and racial categories.

Writing Performances – Student writing skills are assessed using results from the statewide test called *Florida Writes*.[31] On this exam, writing skills are evaluated in terms of a six-point scale. A score of zero represents the lowest level of achievement; whereas a score of six stands for the highest. In 1992, fourth grade students scored an average of 2.3 on the *Writing to Tell A Story* portion of this exam, while they scored 1.7 on the part entitled *Writing to Explain*. The combined average of both was 2.0. Eight graders scored an average of 3.2 on Writing to Explain and 2.8 on the Writing to Convince sections of the test, for a combined average of 3.0.

Figure 4 shows that there was a small but consistent difference between non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics, and Blacks when their performances in *Expository Writing* were compared for both fourth and eighth graders. Hispanics occupy an intermediate position between the higher-scoring Whites and lower-scoring African-Americans. Information for the 1992-1993 school year shows results obtained from the *Florida Writes* exam for LEP fourth and eighth grade students by more detailed racial and ethnic groupings (Table 1).[32] Again, Hispanics exhibit an intermediate position between non-Hispanic Whites and African-Americans.

Mathematics Performances – Students at the fourth and eighth grade levels are also tested in mathematics using the *Trial Assessment Program*.[33] In 1992, 110 Florida public schools participated in the

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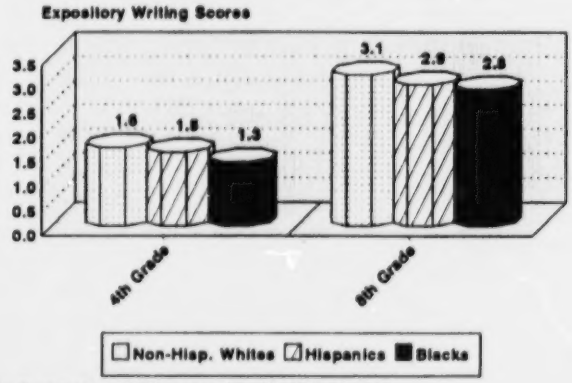
[31]Florida Department of Education, *Florida Writes*, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.

[32]Florida Department of Education, *Profiles of Florida School Districts: 1992-1993 Student Statistical Data*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.

[33]For more information regarding this nationwide program see: U.S. Department of Education, *Mathematics State Report for Florida*, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, D.C., 1992.

AVERAGE SCORES ON THE FLORIDA WRITES TEST GRADES 4 AND 8 DIFFERENCES BY RAND AND ETHNIC GROUP EXPOSITORY WRITING PORTION:1993



Florida Department of Education, Florida Writes, 1993.

Table 1
Average Achievement Scores on the Florida Writes Test for Florida's LEP Students

Ethnic or Racial Groups	4th Grade Achievement Scores	8th Grade Achievement Scores
Asians	1.5	2.2
Blacks	1.1	1.7
Hispanics	1.2	1.9
Native Americans	1.0	1.5
Non-Hispanic Whites	1.5	2.4

Source: Florida Department of Education, *Profiles of Florida School Districts: 1992-1993*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993

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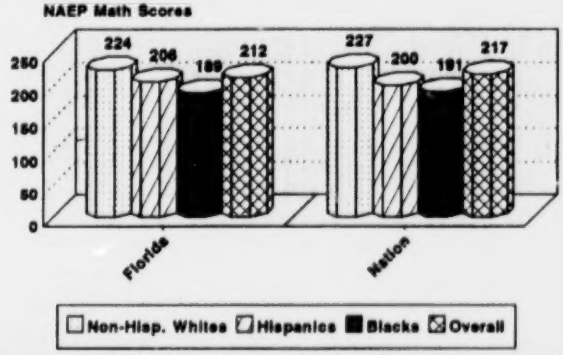
nationwide fourth grade mathematics assessment, and 103 Florida schools participated in the eighth grade mathematics assessment.

Overall student performance was measured using the National Assessment of Educational Progress mathematics scale, which ranges from 0 to 500. The average proficiency of all fourth grade students from Florida was 212, compared to a nationwide average of 217 (Figure 5). On this test 32 percent of Whites fourth graders scored below the defined basic level, with comparable failure rates of 57 percent and 77 percent for Hispanic and Black fourth graders. Data displayed in Figure 5, comparing racial and ethnic groups, again show that Hispanics occupy an intermediate position between better-performing non-Latin Whites and lower-scoring Blacks. Furthermore, there is a pattern of consistency which shows that Florida's ethnic components have lower levels of achievement than their national counterparts, with the notable exception of Hispanics. Florida's Latinos display a slightly higher level of achievement in mathematics than the national average for all Hispanics. This finding reflects the disproportionate influence of Cubans in Florida's Hispanic population because it has been shown that Cubans have higher than average socioeconomic status when compared to most Hispanic American nationality groups.[34]

Results from scores achieved on the mathematics test for Florida's eighth graders were identical in their trends to those just discussed for fourth grade students (Figure 6). The average

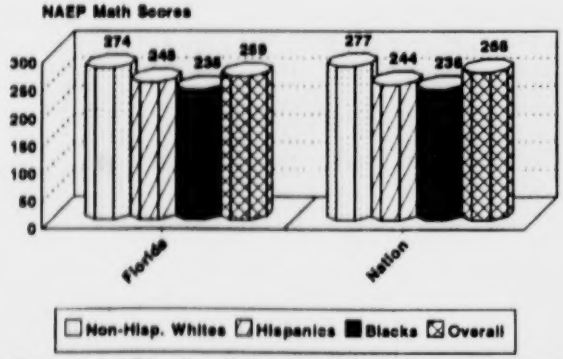
[34]Cuban Americans account for 42.8 percent of Florida's Hispanic population, but only 4.7 percent of the nation's Hispanics. A forthcoming CNC issue paper will compare the socioeconomic characteristics of Cubans with Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Central Americans, South Americans, and the rest of the Hispanics living in the United States and it will demonstrate the higher average socioeconomic status of the Cubans. This is relevant because it has been shown that socioeconomic status is correlated with student performance. Thomas D. Boswell, *A National Demographic Profile of the Cuban American Population*, Cuban American Policy Center, Cuban American National Council, Miami, Florida, forthcoming 1994.

NAEP MATHEMATICS TEST RESULTS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY FOR FOURTH GRADE FOR FLORIDA AND THE NATION: 1992



Florida Department of Education, Mathematics State Report for Florida, 1992.

NAEP MATHEMATICS TEST RESULTS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY FOR EIGHTH GRADE FOR FLORIDA AND THE NATION: 1992



Florida Department of Education, Mathematics State Report for Florida, 1992.

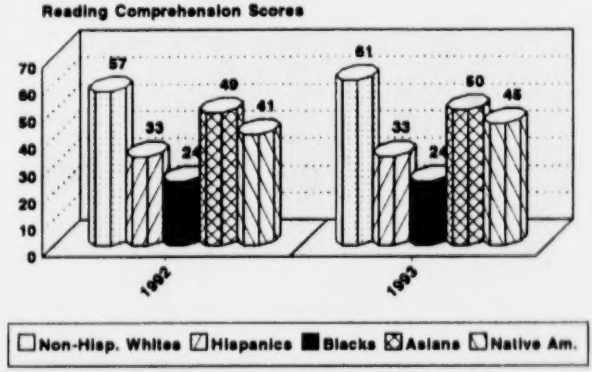
performance of all Florida's students was below the national average. Hispanic students were intermediate in terms of the level of their mathematics scores when compared to the State's non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks. Florida's Hispanic eighth graders did slightly better than average when compared to the nation's Hispanic eighth grade student population. For 1992, 30 percent of non-Latin Whites, 60 percent of all Hispanics, and 73 percent of African-Americans in the eighth grade scored below the national average.

B. Tenth Grade Performance

All public school tenth grade students in Florida are tested yearly using the Grade Ten Assessment Test (**GTAT**).[35] This is a standardized test that measures performance of tenth graders in the subject areas of reading comprehension and mathematics and compares them to national averages using percentiles. The results for both reading comprehension and mathematics (shown in Figures 7 and 8, respectively) indicate that Florida's Hispanics, Blacks and American Indian populations score below the national average (50th percentile); whereas Asians and non-Hispanic Whites score about the same or above the national average. They also show either no change or a very slight improvement in performance between 1992 and 1993. In 1992, 75 percent of Florida's tenth grade LEP students scored below the national average on the mathematics test and 89 percent scored below average on the reading comprehension test.

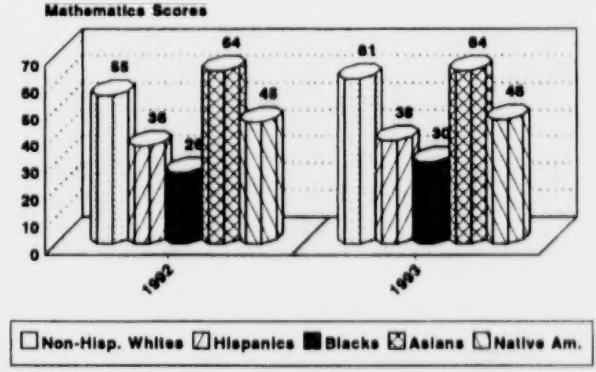
[35]Florida Department of Education, *Grade Ten Assessment Test (GTAT) State, District, and School Report*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.

GRADE TEN ACHIEVEMENT TEST BY RACE AND ETHNICITY
READING COMPREHENSION SCORES
FOR FLORIDA: 1992 AND 1993



Florida Department of Education, Grade Ten Assessment Test, 1993.

GRADE TEN ACHIEVEMENT TEST BY RACE AND ETHNICITY
MATHEMATICS SCORES
FOR FLORIDA: 1992 AND 1993



Florida Department of Education, Grade Ten Assessment Test, 1993.

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C. *High School Performance*

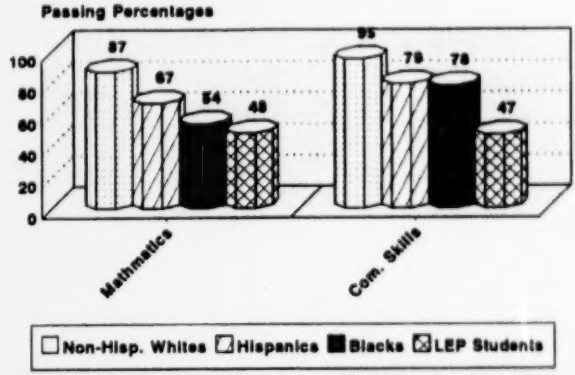
The Florida Department of Education developed the *High School Competency Test* (HSCT) to measure the skills of eleventh graders in reading, writing, and mathematics.[36] Among non-Hispanic White students 95 percent passed the communications standard and 87 percent passed the mathematics standard score (Figure 9). Hispanics had a slightly higher proportion passing both the communications and math portions of the exam than Blacks. Still, almost 20 percent fewer Hispanics passed both exams when compared to non-Latin Whites. Less than half the LEP students passed either exam. Clearly, both Hispanic and African-American minority high schoolers have lower success rates than non-Hispanic whites, and this is especially true with LEP students.

During the 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 school years the passing rate of LEP high school students on the HSCT actually declined, and it did so dramatically (Table 2). The percentage passing the communications portion of the exam dropped 17 percentage points (from 47 percent to only 30 percent) and the decline in those passing the math sections was 14 percentage points (from 48 percent to 34 percent). This is clear indication of a disturbing worsening learning situation for high school LEP students that requires immediate remedial action before it progresses further.

Furthermore, there has been a perceptible decline since 1980 in the percentage of students of all ethnic groups passing the HSCT for communications skills (Figure 10). Since 1984 there has been a similar but smaller decrease in the percentage passing the math portion of the test (Figure 11). It is significant to note that during the 1970s there was a trend of convergence between the high school passing rates of non-Latin Whites, Hispanics, and Blacks on the communications skills part of the exam. However, since 1980 the

[36]For more information about this test see: Florida Department of Education, *High School Competency Test, Grade Eleven: Statistical Report*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.

FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL COMPETENCY TEST PASSING RATES FOR MATHMEMATICS AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: 1993



Florida Department of Education, High School Competentency Test, 1993.

Table 2
Percent of LEP Students by Ethnicity and Race Passing the Communications and Math Components of the HSCT Exam in 1992-1993 School Year

Ethnic and Racial Groups	Communications Component	Math Component
Asians	33%	50%
Blacks	18%	26%
Hispanics	34%	35%
Non-Hispanic Whites	52%	58%
All LEP Students	30% (47%)	34% (48%)

Source: Florida Department of Education, *High School Competency Test, Grade Eleven: Statistical Report*, Division of Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida, 1993.
Note: The figures in parentheses are for the 1991-1992 school year.

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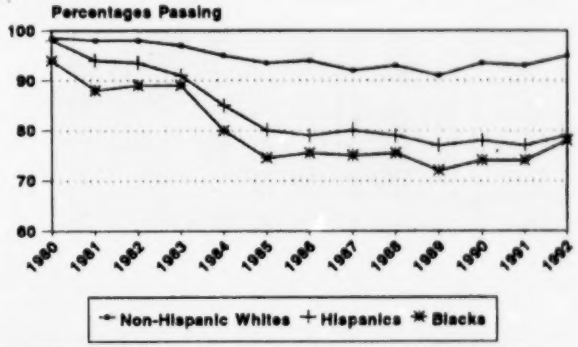
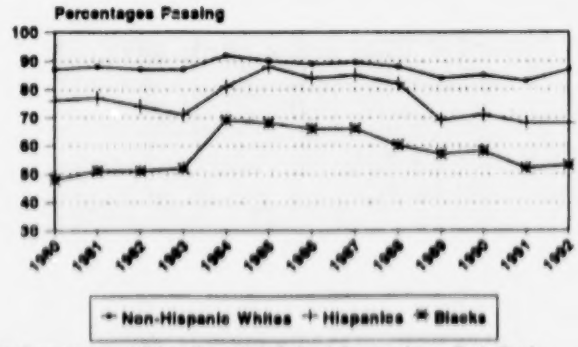
FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL COMPETENCY TEST COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS PORTION PERCENTAGE PASSING ON FIRST TRY: 1980-1992



Florida Department of Education, High School Competency Test, Grade Eleven: Statistical Report, 1993.

FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL COMPETENCY TEST MATHEMATICS SKILLS PORTION PERCENTAGE PASSING ON FIRST TRY: 1980-1992



Florida Department of Education, High School Competency Test, Grade Eleven: Statistical Report, 1993.

gap has been widening between the percentage of Whites passing the exam and the percentages of both Hispanics and African-Americans passing it. As the gap between Whites and Hispanics has been widening, the **difference between Hispanics and Blacks has narrowed**, due primarily to a fall in the success rate for Hispanics. This trend in graduation rates contradicts Goal 2, Standard 1 of Blueprint 2000, which States that all Florida students will graduate from secondary schools.

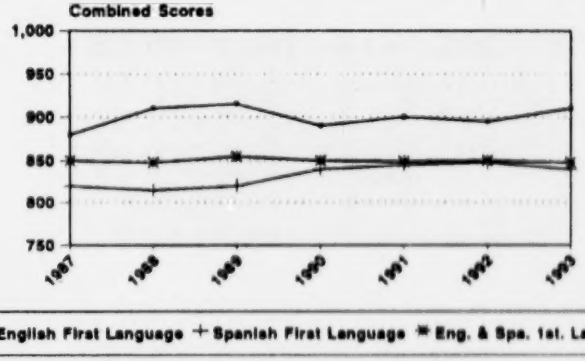
D. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Performance

National studies of SAT scores by national origin have shown that students who learn English first have an advantage in taking the test when compared to those who first learned another language. This is a reasonable finding because the exam was designed for English speaking students. However, research conducted in Canada and in the United States demonstrates that when students become proficient in English, and have also acquired literacy in another language through bilingual schooling, they tend to score either at the same levels as native speakers, or have an advantage over monolingual English speakers.[37]

Data in Figure 12 for Hispanic students only partially corroborate these ideas. Clearly, those Hispanic students who took the SAT exam and had Spanish as a first language scored the lowest. Latinos who learned English first, but later acquired Spanish in school and/or at home, did the best on this exam. On the other hand, those who learned both English and Spanish at the same time only did marginally better than those who learned only Spanish first and they consistently (over the six year period shown) did not do as well as those who learned only English first. This last finding may be due to the possibility that many of the students who learned the

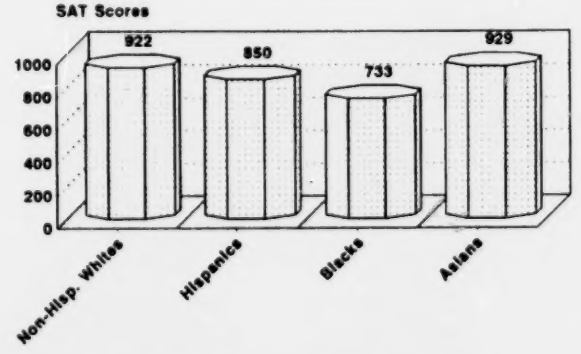
[37]Helena Curtain and Carol Pesola, *Languages and Children: Making the Match* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1992).

NATIONAL SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST RESULTS
TRENDS IN SCORES BY FIRST LANGUAGE LEARNED
ALL TEST-TAKERS OF LATIN AMERICAN ORIGIN: 1987-1993



College Entrance Examination Board, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993.

SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST RESULTS FOR FLORIDA
BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: 1992



College Entrance Examination Board, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993.

two languages simultaneously, learned Spanish at home without formal bilingual instruction, so they were not truly literate in its use.

The bars in Figure 13 show that Florida's Hispanic students, most of whom learned Spanish first, score lower than non-Hispanic Whites, as should be expected based on the discussion above regarding ways of acquiring the first language. However, despite possible language difficulties in English when taking the SAT exam, Hispanics on average still score much higher than Blacks. Nevertheless, it is clear that both Hispanics and African-Americans score significantly lower than either non-Latin Whites or Asians.

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XI. Author's Biography

A native of Cuba, Dr. Arnhilda Badia is an Associate Professor for Modern Languages Education at Florida International University. She received her B.A. degree from Meredith College in North Carolina and her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She was State Supervisor for Bilingual Education and Foreign Languages for the Florida Department of Education under Commissioner of Education Ralph Turlington. She has served as elected President of both the Florida Foreign Language Association and the National Council for Hispanic Culture. In 1982 she was appointed by President Reagan as Chairperson of the National Advisory Council on Bilingual Education. In 1984 she was elected State Representative for District 112 in the State of Florida. In 1986 she was appointed chairperson of the Florida Commission on International Education. Because of her successful achievements during the 1985 Legislative Session, she was named Freshman of the Year and Legislator of the Year by several State and local civic organizations. During her time spent at Florida International University she had held several administrative positions, such as Director of Sponsored Research and Training and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Badia has conducted a number of studies in the area of bilingual education, multicultural studies, and second language acquisition. She has edited a book entitled *La Educación en Cuba: Pasado, Presente, y Futuro* (Miami: Cuban American National Endowment, Cuban American National Foundation, 1993) and is the author of *Nuevos Horizontes* (Compton, California: Santillana Publishing Company, 1994), a K-5 Series dealing with how to teach Spanish to native speakers. This series has been adopted by the State of Florida and will be used in many of its elementary school bilingual education programs. Currently, Dr. Badia is working on a book dealing with *Second Language Acquisition and ESOL Methodology*.

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